

MINIBUS GUIDELINES

Introduction

Minibus accidents can be particularly serious, so the government imposes tight rules regarding the licensing, servicing and insurance of these vehicles.

These rules are too complex to be set out in full in a guide like this – contacts for more information are given at the end of this note.

What is a minibus?

A vehicle that can carry from 9 – 16 passengers *including* the driver.

Is my minibus licensed?

Drivers and passengers of a minibus are only covered by insurance if the minibus is licensed.

Departments who maintain minibuses will need to ensure that they have Section 19 permit.

[Section 19 permits](#) are either ‘standard permits’ for vehicles which are adapted to carry no more than 16 passengers (excluding the driver) or ‘large bus permits’ for vehicles which are adapted to carry 17 or more passengers. These permits may be granted to organisations that operate vehicles without a view to profit to transport their members, or people whom the organisation exists to help. Section 19 permit vehicles can’t be used to carry members of the general public.

Applying for a permit

Applications forms for standard permits are available from:

- [section 19 application for a standard or large bus permit](#)
- the DVSA Customer Service Centre on 0300 123 9000
- the central licensing office in Leeds by emailing permits@vosa.gov.uk
- a designated body
- local authorities

You need one permit per minibus but can transfer it (eg to a hired vehicle) if yours is off the road.

Who can drive the minibus?

Any employee or student of the University aged over 21 with D1 entitlement on their licence (this is automatic for driving tests which were passed before 1 January 1997).

If you obtained your driving licence after 1 January 1997, you’ll need to [apply for a minibus licence](#).

Conditions you must meet

You can drive a minibus within the UK as long as the following conditions apply:

- you’re 21 or older with a D1 entitlement on your licence
- you’ve had your driving licence for at least 2 years
- you meet the [‘Group 2’ medical standards](#) if you’re over 70 - check with your GP if you’re not sure you meet the standards
- you’re driving on a voluntary basis and the minibus is used for social purposes by a non-commercial body
- the maximum weight of the minibus is not more than 3.5 tonnes - or 4.25 tonnes including specialist equipment for disabled passengers, e.g. a wheelchair ramp
- you’re not towing a trailer

If you do not meet the above criteria, the journey is not covered by insurance.

A Category B licence allows you to drive vehicles up to 3,500kg Maximum Authorised Mass (MAM) with up to 8 passenger seats (with a trailer up to 750kg). **Please inform the Insurance Office immediately if you wish to drive a minibus using Category B licence** because this allowance must be approached with a great deal of caution: drivers must be over 21, must have 2 years driving experience and the maximum vehicle weight must not exceed 3.5 tonnes.

Please note:

The insurance excess for under 25 year olds is £450, for all others it is £250.

Can I take it abroad?

No – the Section 19 Small Bus Permit is invalid outside the UK. It is recommended you hire a vehicle with driver for foreign trips.

What about seatbelts?

Minibuses, coaches and buses first used on or after 1st October 2001 must have seatbelts fitted in all forward and rear facing seats, including the driver's seat.

Coaches and minibuses first used prior to 1 October 2001 which are used to carry children aged 3 to 15 years on organised trips must provide each child with (as a minimum) a lap belt on a forward facing seats.

In all circumstances seat belts must be worn unless the passenger has a medical exemption.

Children under 12 in the front seats (parallel with the driver) must use a seatbelt or the correct child seat for their weight.

What are the rules about drivers' hours?

Drivers who are employees of the permit holder are subject to domestic drivers' hour's rules.

All drivers should be aware of the risks to passenger safety which can result from driving when tired. It's not sensible to set off on a long trip after a full day's work, whether that work involves driving or not. You should plan more rest breaks than are set out in the regulations, if you don't drive for a living. Aim to have a 15-minute break from driving every 2 hours. If possible, share the driving.

Am I responsible for roadworthiness?

Each department is responsible for ensuring the safe operation of your vehicles, within the legal requirements and under a valid permit. You should ensure that:

- your drivers are suitably trained and correctly licensed
- your drivers take appropriate breaks
- your vehicles satisfy the appropriate construction and use requirements and are maintained in a safe and roadworthy condition
- your vehicles are insured and your insurer is aware that your vehicles are used to provide services for hire or reward under a permit
- the vehicle isn't operated with a view to profit, nor incidentally to an activity which is itself carried on with a view to profit
- you only carry the class(es) of passengers allowed by the permit and, in the case of section 19, you don't provide any transport services that could be viewed to be carrying the general public
- you inform DVSA or the designated body that issued your permit of any changes such as the change of name of your organisation, as this means that your permit needs to be replaced.

It is recommended that:

- A daily walk around check is made by a responsible person (normally the driver) before the vehicle is used. This also applies to hired vehicles.
- Defects must be reported promptly in writing and rectification work recorded - defect reports have to be kept for at least 15 months.

How do I report defects?

Your Department needs to set up a procedure to report defects - please complete a defect report form.

You should not attempt to drive the vehicle if the defect makes it un-roadworthy.

Contacts, Permits and further reading

Contacts

Name	Department	Tel	email
Sarah James	Finance Dept.	(01970) 621748	insurance@aber.ac.uk
Helena Norris	Finance Dept.	(01970) 628525	

Permits

The DVSA Contact Centre on 0300 123 9000

[Section 19 application for a standard or large bus permit](#)

The central licensing unit in Leeds by emailing permits@vosa.gov.uk

Further reading:

[Driving a Minibus](#) – GOV.UK (DVLA guidelines)

You should read the [Guide to Maintaining Roadworthiness](#), also available from DVSA on 0300 123 9000.